



rivers&trails

National
Park
Service



rivers, trails, and conservation assistance program

SAFFORD MULTI-USE TRAIL

Project Goal

To increase community participation in trail planning and implementation – and trail events.

Background

Safford, AZ is a rural community located in the Gila River valley. With a population over 9,000, this growing community is quickly becoming a commerce, agricultural, medical, and educational hub for southeastern AZ and southwestern NM.

Community leaders recognized the opportunity to develop a regional trails system to promote outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide alternative transportation linkage routes.

The trail follows existing irrigation canals, washes and utility easements owned by the City. Long range plans intend to connect parks, school yards, shopping areas, and neighboring towns for non-motorized and equestrian trail users.

Interpretation along the trail will highlight historic, agricultural, geologic, and cultural aspects unique to the Gila River valley. Signage will also convey messages to promote the benefits of physical activity and trails.

Initial local trail planning proposed trails along agricultural fields on the outskirts of town. Through RTCA assistance, community input at public meetings identified the desire for a trails network closer to existing neighborhoods community facilities. Committed public participation and highly creative partnerships, described below, are the impetus for success of this trail.

The project began in FY 2000. Phase I of a community trail was planned by community residents and elected officials with assistance from the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service. Construction contributions for Phase I included in-kind labor from AZ National Guard and grants from AZ State Parks Heritage Fund. In May 2000, the first 1.5 miles of trail was dedicated for public use.

Planning work on Phase II began during construction of Phase I with assistance from the same federal agencies. The AZ National Guard will, again, contribute in-kind labor for grading the trail. Road millings from a local highway project will be recycled and used as the trail surface for Phase II of this project. Additional in-kind labor will be by the Federal Corrections Institution – Safford. Inmates will fabricate concrete trail furnishings such as exercise stations, benches, and trash receptacles. AZ State Prison – Graham inmates will install the trail furnishings.

Future phases of this project include preparation of an open space area for off-highway vehicle use, a 5-mile river trail and riverbank restoration efforts, and a regional trails system that links neighboring communities with existing trails on adjacent federal lands.

Safford, AZ



continued

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National Park Service Role

Throughout the project, Rivers and Trails staff have expanded the planning process to insure public input on the trail plan and have encouraged cooperation among adjoining towns to develop and adopt a regional trails plan. These adopted trails plans strengthen each town's eligibility for state and federal recreation funding. In addition, RTCA staff has worked to facilitate youth involvement in the planning process, and development of interpretive signage along the trail to explain cultural, historic, geologic, agricultural features within the region and health benefits of trail use and outdoor recreation.

Project Results to Date

- 1.5 miles of trail built and in use.
- 1.5 miles of trail to be built in Spring 2001.
- Two exercise stations ordered, to be installed early 2001.

Project Partners

- City of Safford – staff, community and political support for planning and implementation.
- Bureau of Land Management – planning and construction drawings.
- U.S. Forest Service – recreation planning, and \$8,000 cost share grant.

- Mt. Graham Regional Hospital – planning, and \$3,000 worth of exercise equipment.
- Federal Corrections Institution, Safford – fabrication of trail furnishings.
- AZ State Prison, Graham – installation of trail furnishings.
- AZ National Guard for grading and construction of Phase I.
- Phelps Dodge Corporation – planning and donation of materials for bridge building.

Contacts

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